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SIR WILLIAM MONSON

The hardest thing to predicate about a man is whether he will be remembered when he is dead; and if so for how long. "It is enough," declares a great American, "if one competes successfully with his own generation,"—and in that view must lie whatever satisfaction most of us will ever get of fame. There is, indeed, but one sure way to keep one's memory alive. Among the paths to immortality,—an eminent ability in the destruction of one's kind, some superhuman service to the race, some more than usual villainy, some freak of fortune, character, or birth,—all men are equal till one writes a book;—and truly if ever man had reason to believe the pen mightier than the sword it is Sir William Monson. Among the daring seamen of Elizabeth he was by no means the least; among the counsellors of her Stuart successors his voice was not the mildest; among the upholders of English naval supremacy he occupies a not unenviable place. Yet were it not for the inconsequential fact that in his later years the old sea-dog chanced to commit his growls to paper, we might well ask in vain of him,—as of a multitude of other worthies, stout men of head and hand who in their day did no little to direct the destinies of the world,—"Who was Sir William Monson?"

Yet it would seem that his career might entitle him to remembrance, even had he not taken to driving quill when he left off wielding cutlass. There are greater figures than his in the stirring times when he played his part among the world's affairs, but there is scarcely one which touched those affairs on so many sides, or was so typical a product of the times. Certainly there is not one whom we can now recall that managed to live long enough to fight the Armada at one end of his life and to command a Ship-Money fleet at the other; least of all one so capable of recording his experiences. Not without high lights and purple patches which make it well worth recovering from the semi-oblivion into which it has fallen, his long career is a peculiarly accurate type of the successive generations which he adorned. And if you would find your way behind Elizabethan scenes and see how that magnificent

spectacle was staged; if you would learn somewhat of its actors at first hand, and feel the stir of those days when carrack and galleon still sailed the seas, when Raleigh sought El Dorado and Drake led his handful of adventurers to sack the Treasure House of the World, go find Sir William, sit down beside the chimney fire and listen to the old sea tales which have been the inspiration of two centuries of naval preëminence.

In nearly all of its earlier characteristics his life offers the typical features of his generation, and it is not the worse for that. It has been long since the boy who runs away to sea played the part in literature which he once played in life; but when young Monson exchanged the Balliol quadrangle for the deck of a privateer, neither in literature nor in life was such an escapade so rare as it has since become, for the world was then crowded with great events whose principal theatre was the sea. William the Silent was leading his countrymen in that desperate revolt against the Spanish power which was to become a landmark of liberty; Henry of Navarre was waiting his opportunity amid the civil wars which devastated France to make his way to Ivry and the crown; and every port of Spain and Portugal rang with busy preparation for the mighty enterprise which with the aid of Parma's army, then gathering in the Netherlands, was to crush England and Holland and so reëstablish the supremacy of Spain and the Vatican, now sadly shrunk beneath the strokes of the reformed communions. Hawkins and Drake and Frobisher, who had dealt some of the shrewdest of those blows, were then in the heyday of their spectacular careers, and among the crews of those innumerable vessels then pushing out from every English port to spoil the Spaniard there were many who, like this Lincolnshire youth, were fired by the exploits of their famous countrymen to draw a sword for England and her faith and, as Monson observes of himself, "inclined to see the world," and, it might well be, make their fortunes.

To the oncoming generations each new age offers its peculiar opportunity. What the Crusades were to the young knight of the Middle Ages, what the plunder of Mexico and Peru was to the Spaniard of the early sixteenth century; what the camp was to Napoleonic France, and business to nineteenth-century

America, privateering was to the Elizabethan. So, in embracing it as a profession, Monson was but an exponent of the spirit of his age when the sea and the court were the open way for the talents of an English youth. And he was not merely a type, he was the type destined to survive by its success. Not many of his fellow-adventurers could boast, like him, of having helped bring back from his earliest enterprise the first Spanish prize ever seen in an English port; fewer still were able to congratulate themselves on such rapid rise thereafter. It is not likely that the parental blessing was difficult to secure for one whose professional career had begun so auspiciously, and it was evident that this, or some kindred influence, contributed to place the young adventurer almost at once in command of a ship of his own. It must have been that seamen were developed rapidly in those strenuous days, or that he had some extraordinary influences at work in his behalf. But, even so, when at the mature age of eighteen he voyaged to the Canaries and, disguised as a Fleming, found his way into and out of Flores harbor unharmed; and when later falling in with a "Biscayner well-manned, sufficiently furnished and bravely defended," his crew were forced by the height of the seas to ungrapple and leave some of their number fighting on board the stranger from eight o'clock in the evening till eight in the morning, when she finally struck, we must admit he had not chosen his profession ill, if some unusual quality of adroitness and courage and leadership be any proof. These, perhaps as much as family influence, doubtless enabled him a year after that wild night in the north Atlantic to embark as a volunteer on the Queen's own pinnace in the eventful week's fighting which ended at Gravelines and the overthrow of the Armada.

This much is certain, that whatever star guided his early course, thenceforth Monson sailed no longer as a privateer but as an officer of those successive expeditions by which Elizabeth, so long as she lived, wreaked vengeance on the power which had threatened her life and throne, summoned her subjects to renounce her authority, fomented Irish rebellion against her rule, and supported the claims of her rival. In this long counter-crusade, fleet after fleet put out from English ports to harry the

weakened power of Philip the Second, till that power was no longer to be reckoned with as formidable, much less dangerous on any sea. Drake, Essex, Cumberland, in turn harassed the Spanish coasts and island ports, cut off convoys and merchantmen, and learned from them the wealth of Indian trade, the secrets of the sea-ways east and west. Their successors, following the track of Drake and Cavendish about the world, broke through the dangers and the prohibitions of the rich monopoly, and with the Dutch close in their wake poured into Europe the riches of the declining Spanish-Portuguese possessions over sea and shifted the colonial and economic balance of the world.

In this exciting, profitable pursuit Monson had his full share. "Dangers and perils by the sword and famine, by danger of the sea and other casualties, as all men are subject to that run such desperate adventures," so he writes, were his in plenteous measure. His escape from shipwreck and starvation, by which, as he tells us, he "received two lives from God"; the daring attempt that he and Captain Lister made to cut out a ship from Flores harbor with a boat's crew, "rather like mad than discreet men," and finally taking it with the help of another boat sent out to rescue them; his capture of the rich carrack, the *St. Valentine*, which crowned his achievements in this field; such were the incidents which for a dozen years made up the sum of his adventurous life. Full of the thrust of sword and push of pike, attack, repulse, and stratagems and spoils, hair-breadth escapes by land and sea, they were busy years. It would be too long to tell of his innumerable adventures here; how once when Essex was outflanked by a fortified house, Monson, with fifty "old soldiers of the Low Countries," took it with no more danger to himself, he says "than a musket bullet through his scarf and breeches and the pummel of his sword shot from his side"; of how again, finding himself at night amid a Spanish fleet he had been sent to spy upon, he held a dagger at the throat of his Spanish servant compelling him to cry out that there was a strange ship among them; conceiving, as the event proved, that his enemies "having warning from me of it, of all others they could not suspect that I was she." Such was, no doubt, the daily lot of many men of those times as of all other times of war; yet to

the man of peace to whom there comes across the centuries the echo of these long-dead rivalries, the exploits and the stratagems of old conflicts, they retain a charm not of phrase alone, they wake something of the spirit which made them possible.

“All this how far away!
Mere delectation meet for a minute’s dream!—
Just as a drudging student trims his lamp,
Opens his Plutarch, puts him in the place
Of Roman, Grecian; draws the patched gown close,
Dreams, ‘Thus should I fight, save or rule the world!’—
Then smilingly, contentedly, awakes
To the old solitary nothingness.”

The more so, perhaps, in that he knows the peace that no Elizabethan ever knew. For Monson’s career in those eventful days and in the darker years to come was not merely of naval interest. Scarcely was he embarked upon his second voyage when he was captured, and from his experiences as a Spanish prisoner and galley-slave brought back, among other things, some of his choicest tales, with which, to the end of his days he was accustomed to amuse his family and his friends. That they were worth the hearing, the story of “Seignior Fernandez” bears witness, if we had no other specimen. Even in Monson’s brief chronicle of his fellow-prisoner, the unfortunate agent of the dispossessed Pedro of Portugal, whom Englishmen once dreamed of making king again, there lives the flavor of a real romance. From this source, too, he drew much of that inexhaustible store of miscellaneous information which served him and his country well through many years. And if Sir William had only told us how he himself was freed from his imprisonment, he would have added to our entertainment and, perhaps to his advantage and our own, have cleared his own memory of the aspersion which some later biographers have cast upon it.

But this Elizabethan, like so many of his kind, was an amphibious creature; and, in the intervals of voyaging against the Spaniard, he found time and opportunity to embark on a career no less adventurous and scarcely less hazardous than following the sea,—for he became a courtier. Whatever moving accidents he had in that great enterprise he has not told, and we shall probably never know; but by them he gained more than by

his exploits in seamanship, which made so fine a background for one who risked his fate at the brilliant and treacherous court of the Virgin Queen. First attaching himself to the train of the ill-fated Essex, he drew from that connection knighthood and the captaincy of a second-rate. When that nobleman's folly and misfortune drove him toward disgrace and death, Monson, like the prudent seaman that he was, perceived the coming storm in time, and as the wind shifted in the royal skies, shortened sail, tacked fairly about, and caught the favoring breeze which bore the house of Howard to favor;—and so gained consideration due to a safe, shrewd, and eminently useful man. Thus commending himself to his superiors in that capacity, his unalterable devotion to the Queen, which he in common with most of his fellows professed—and possibly felt—did not prevent him, like his superiors, from mourning her death and welcoming her successor with the same loyal breath. This, no less than his conspicuous service and well-known quality of attachment to the crown, brought him the post of Admiral of the Narrow Seas on James the First's accession, and so conducted him unwittingly to the climax and crisis of his whole career.

As the commander of the Channel Fleet for nearly a dozen years he was, as he had been before in his capacity of privateer and courtier, close to the heart of great events. In the Channel lay the centre of the conflict between Spain and the Dutch which embraced the fortunes of two continents. There France, under her new king, Henry of Navarre, began to put forth the beginnings of a fleet which was presently to cause England no small concern and to affect her politics in as yet unsuspected ways. There the Dunkirkers, half merchants and more than half pirates, pursued their devious ways to the exasperation of the sea-going world at large. It was a post which required more than mere vigilance; at times it became the turning-point of momentous affairs. And it was here that the Admiral was enabled to perform his crowning service to his royal master, and touch the most romantic episode of his time, when only his prompt action prevented the escape to France and the marriage to her cousin of that unfortunate Stuart princess, "sweet Arabella, child of woe," which would have given the pair a claim to the English crown

superior to that of James himself. This would have seemed to provide the fortunate admiral a claim on the gratitude of his sovereign, which would have outweighed any future indiscretion, however serious, and insured his promotion to the highest post in his profession.

But that was not the nature of James, the design of fortune, nor the fate of Monson; for, with his foot almost on the last round that led to safe and eminent success, he fell. From Digby, the English ambassador to Spain, came the fatal proof of the fact that, during almost the whole term of his service as admiral, Monson had been in receipt of a Spanish pension. It was of no avail that most of his fellows and superiors were open to the same charge; it was of even less use to plead past service to a man like James; least of all could any man hope for mercy when there were so many aspirants for place; and Monson was summarily dismissed. Troubles never come singly. Scarcely was he out of office when he was accused of complicity in the most famous scandal of his day, the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury by the Earl of Rochester and his mistress, the Lady Frances Howard, whom the Earl designed to marry, once her divorce, in whose way Sir Thomas stood, had been secured. There was little against Monson save his attachment to the house of Howard, but he and his brother were none the less sent to the Tower whence they were released some months later for lack of evidence. Cleared of this charge, the Monsons were drawn into an intrigue by which the enemies of the Duke of Buckingham sought to replace that favorite in the royal affections with Sir William's son. But James had all the blind and obstinate attachment to unworthiness which sometimes forms the strongest characteristic of weakness. Not all the daily washing of his face in curds to improve his naturally beautiful complexion; not all his splendid costumes with which his backers adorned his pleasing person; nor ostentatious taking of the Anglican sacrament to escape the charge of Catholic tendencies; least of all his being thrust perpetually on the royal attention, availed to bring young Monson into favor. The youth, doubtless to his great relief, was commanded to desist from his attentions to the monarch; his father was virtually

notified to leave the court; and the unworthy though characteristic intrigue ended disastrously for all parties concerned. Broken in spirit by successive misfortunes crowding so thickly upon him, the admiral withdrew to the little estate of Kennersley, which he had managed to acquire in the course of his long public career; there to meditate the vicissitudes of fortune and the composition of a book.

Thereafter he lived long, but only once was he summoned from his retirement to serve his country. When in that long era of personal government which followed their break with Parliament, Charles I and his advisers, much disturbed by the threats of the triumphant Dutch and the increasing French sea-power, fostered by Richelieu, resorted to the ill-fated policy of Ship-Money to raise a fleet, Monson, conscious of its necessity and not sensitive to the constitutional issue involved, supported them with zeal. As his reward he became vice-admiral of the Ship-Money fleet for a brief period, and in that post found some solace for his long neglect. Thenceforth his few declining years were spent upon those literary labors which had always claimed his attention, and which, when his professional career was ended, had become his chief activity. But his long life was not to close without one last look at the great events of life; for, in the very months that he lay on what was to be his death-bed, the forces of Parliament and King gathered to the final test of supremacy, and scarcely was he in his grave when the English civil wars had formally begun. Thus in neglect, if not in disgrace, ended the dreams of his once greatly promising career.

But his book was done; and despite the ill-fortune of his life, that, it might have been supposed, would have secured for him at least the brief moment of fame denied him while alive. The hard-won wisdom gained from long command, wide knowledge of naval affairs of his own and other lands, an infinity of "stratagems," involving almost every conceivable possibility of attack and defence of England's coasts, from the hand of an acknowledged master of sea-strategy, would, he might well have imagined, have found an eager welcome from his countrymen, even had his writings not been enlivened with reminiscence and anecdote, wise saws and modern instances, to say nothing of

pen-portraits and estimates of his great contemporaries at first hand. With these rich fruits of a hard and not wholly inglorious life, despite its final failure, he might well have thought to recoup by his pen the fortunes which his wit and sword had failed to maintain; and gain from competition with the centuries the recognition he had not been able to wrest from his own generation.

Yet never was fortune more fickle in death as in life to any man than to Sir William Monson. If he dreamed this, as undoubtedly he did, his shade, had it been able to observe the earliest results of his endeavor in the field of literature, must have suffered a cruel disappointment. First he lingered over the completion of his book till publication in his lifetime was impossible, and so he remained almost if not quite unknown to the men of his time as an author. Before he had become accustomed to his grave the Civil War had broken out; and, among the thirty thousand pamphlets which its vociferous course produced, not even family, much less public or publishing interest, opened the way to print. Beside this, one even more potent influence balked him in death as in life of realizing his ambitions. Under the usual conditions of literature the fact that one's manuscript finds no publisher argues some defect of quality, or pocket-book, or popular taste; but Sir William's case was so exactly the opposite of this that it finds scarcely a parallel in literary history. Strangely enough it was because his manuscript was reckoned so valuable that it failed of publication for so many years.

What this value was, an incident may illustrate. A quarter of a century after his death, a certain rising expert in admiralty affairs, one Samuel Pepys, Clerk of the Acts and on his way to the Secretaryship, called in one day to see the Duke of York, then Lord High Admiral, about some matters connected with the naval reorganization which the disasters of late war with the Dutch had made imperative. Thus he records his curious experience. "Beginning to talk in general of the excellency of old constitutions," so he writes, the Duke "did bring out of his cabinet, and made me read it, an extract out of a book of my late Lord Northumberland's so prophetic of the business of Chatham

as is almost miraculous. I did desire," he goes on to say, "and he did give it me to copy out, which pleased me mightily." With this began Sir William's revenge on his own generation and on posterity, for this was the famous passage in his "Book of Stratagems" concerning the probable course of a Dutch attack, should one take place. Had the Dutch seen it, as it has been surmised that they or some one in their interest had done, they could not have followed its details more closely than when, two years before Pepys wrote, their fleet, passing up the Medway and the Thames to sink the helpless English men-of-war laid up at anchorage, had, for the first time and the last, affrighted London with the sound of hostile guns.

Sir William's carefully considered stratagems were, in fact, far too inflammable material to risk in print. They had the same value as modern plans so carefully guarded in every modern war and navy office to meet the quick emergency of sudden hostilities; and so they were preserved in royal or naval cabinets or passed from hand to hand, as too useful to an enemy to be published broadcast. Not till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Spain was no longer to be feared and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had set Dutch William on the English throne, and so had removed all danger from the other English foe of Monson's time, did his *Tracts* see the light in any complete form. Before that, indeed, the earlier innocuous part, the so-called "early voyages," had been in print; but not until two hundred years were past and the old admiral's naval tracts had become a curiosity, was he to receive the full reward of his long literary labors. Only now is the Navy Records Society giving his writings final fitting form, and the recognition which he sought so earnestly.

Here, then, you have his life and works;—what, then, of his character and his place in history? The answer is not wholly obvious. Everything about him and his long career presages romance, yet that is a word one scarcely associates with Sir William and his kind. In the ordinary course of human affairs we should expect that from such an eventful and adventurous life would have emerged a bluff and hearty sea-captain, redolent of fore-castle and quarter-deck; a courtier versed in the devious

ways which lead to worldly eminence; a volume full of wild tales of hairbreadth escapes, fierce encounter, daring adventure, romantic episodes. In some degree this is the fact. Whole sections of his book are made of such material, the pages are thick with sea-spray and powder smoke. And yet as one reads on and on, and, if his time and patience endure, still on and on, this is not the whole of the impression that he gets, nor, indeed, the greater part of it.

"A talent," says Goethe, "is formed in quiet, a character in the stream of the world,"—and perhaps to most of us the character and the stream seem far the stronger, finer of the two. Yet the inference is not wholly sound nor the dictum wholly true. Eminent characters have been formed in the stillness no less than in the noisy places of the world,—and there are all sorts of characters. Surely if ever they were formed in the worldly stream it was in the days of Elizabeth. But run through the public men reared then to play their part under her successor,—Cecil and Nottingham, Coke, Bacon, Somerset,—almost alone the old soldier Suffolk was not touched with that defect of morality based on the text over which the divines then busily engaged in translating the Scriptures must have lingered long, "The love of money is the root of all evil." The great Elizabethan period, with all its splendor of achievement, its professed chivalry, its gorgeous settings, its picturesque figures, its able men, was preëminently an age when the qualities of the ape and the tiger were the touchstone of success. Behind the mask of courtly usages too often lurked sycophancy and intrigue, with their attendant vices of envy, jealousy, and treachery; beneath the gallantry of exploits by sea lay the unpleasant fact that English privateer and Moorish pirate were often not far apart in their methods of acquiring wealth. And never was there a time when wealth at any cost was more passionately sought; when place and power and riches more effectually concealed the loose morality which gave them birth.

It is, then, no peculiar weakness of Monson's character, as some have assumed, that his pages, like his life, contain some of these elements. Periods, like men, have the defects of their qualities. In that the England of Elizabeth and James was no

less frankly money-mad than great sections of society to-day. He was a child of his age; and in nothing more than in that which led to his downfall. Of all the accusations against him the most damning is that as commander of the Channel Fleet he took a Spanish pension; in the opinion of many it admits of no defence. A statesman or officer to-day, convicted of such an act, would, it is true, be irretrievably disgraced; and it is, doubtless, no excuse for Monson to say that England was not then at war with Spain, and so no treachery in the ordinary sense could be alleged. It is more to the point to note that in his day even ministers were subject to like influence; that judges, Bacon himself, were guilty of similar practices; and that the custom was so notorious that Sully wrote that "every considerable personage about the English court was in receipt of a French pension."

Standards, like temptations, alter from age to age. We cannot foretell how public men to-day may be judged by the generation of 2100 A.D.; yet we may well conceive that if the public conscience maintains its present rate of development, by that time, if not much sooner, a senator of the United States interested in a public service corporation, an English cabinet minister owning shares in property whose value might be enormously increased through territorial annexation or government adoption of mechanical devices, or a Continental official involved in furnishing information to the manufacturers of war supplies, to take no further and no more definite instances, may well be looked upon in the same light by which the virtuous present regards Sir William Monson's Spanish pension. Something of this changing public sentiment we have already seen; and we may therefore be the better judges of the later years of Elizabeth and the reign of James the First, in comparison with our own experience. For they form, like our own time, the climax of a long period of injustice and fraud, of corruption in high places, and an era of change with the awakening of a new public conscience. It happens when such a development culminates and the pendulum begins its backward swing, that many suffer who have but done what their fellows had done according to the custom of their predecessors. This, if there is any excuse,

must be Sir William Monson's, and surely in this generation, if anywhere, he should find sympathizers.

Yet, whatever the old admiral's defects of character as developed in the stream of the world which was his environment; whatever his misfortunes as a scapegoat; or his vices and weakness as judged by the immutable standards of absolute right and wrong; despite his evil reputation, which lived after him so long, and which his biographers of the past generation and our own have again revived; whatever the lack of relation between the idealized portrait of himself which he drew in his book and the more unsavory facts of his career,—if they are really true,—with these we are far less concerned than with the good which was not buried with his bones. As “the first English seaman who has left on record not only an account of the events in which he took part and a critical examination of the seamen of his own time and of those who preceded and followed him,” surely for this we may be to his faults a little blind. Few, even among naval men, can pretend to passing interest in six volumes of naval tracts, and a confirmed Elizabethan may be pardoned for hesitating to engage so formidable an adversary. Yet despite forbidding title and bulk, if you find time to listen to the tale, however long, of a sometime colleague of Drake, the quaint narrative of moving accident by flood and field, the shrewd reflections on life and the world generally as it was made manifest to an Elizabethan-Jacobean sea-captain and courtier, you will find your reward.

It is no easy task, and it has not been made the easier by Sir William's editors. The very title is discouraging: *A Treatise of Sea Causes: A Yearly Observation of the English and Spanish Fleets that were set forth*—[observe the admirable restraint!]*—one to annoy the other. By W. M. who hath done it to better his experience.* This is not promising. Worse is to come. The solemn Purist who two centuries ago, in the most formal period of English literature, composed the preface to the first editon, did one good thing, unlike the later editor, he made his preface short. Otherwise—again unlike the latest editor—he did his best to damn the book. “Some nice persons,” he begins engagingly, “will perhaps at the first reading of this work find fault with the

language and wonder that Sir William, who was a gentleman by birth, and so great a man as an Admiral," could write so badly. No one, least of all his introducer, can vindicate the language, "but it must be remembered," he goes on to say, that the author "though born a gentleman, spent most of his time at sea, a very unfit school for a man to improve his language"; and besides, he adds in a triumph of fatuous complacency, "we must not expect that the days of Queen Elizabeth could form a man to the language of our time." "Not so pleasing in style as some might desire," he continues in a desperate endeavor to save the rash reader from an untimely fate, "full of oversights, mistakes, or, to speak plainly, falsehoods. . . . What I have said is not to apologize for the work or to prepossess the reader, but only to prevent his being too hasty in condemning." In that laudable object he fails by anticipation, for surely never was any book so badly introduced.

Escaping the delights of the introduction we are confronted by another barrier, the first of six dedications to the successive parts into which the work is divided. The mere list of them throws much light on the author's character. First he writes to his eldest son; then to such "Gentlemen and Commanders as were Actors in the wars with Spain in the days of Queen Elizabeth"; then an "Epistle to all Captains of Ships, Masters, Pilots, Mariners and Common Sailors"; then simply to "the reader"; then to "the Projectors of this Age"; and, finally, to "the King's Excellent Majesty." Here lay his heart,—his son, his service, his fellow-adventurers, small and great, his sovereign and those who read his book. His seems a simple creed. Yet that he was far from as simple a seaman as these titles indicate, one soon perceives if he reads but a little way into these entertaining prefaces.

Take the first;—it might have well been written by Polonius. To his heir he commends three things, "that after so many pains and perils God has sent life to your father to further your education; by the second you may value his recompenses and rewards with his deservings; that by the third you shall have just cause to abandon the thoughts of such dangerous and uncertain courses." Thus, in his advancing years, speaks the man who, from about the age of the son whom he now addressed,

followed the most hazardous of all professions for a full third of a century and gave it up from compulsion not from choice. Surely the generations do not greatly change parental admonition to shun the course one has one's self pursued.

Still less do they alter the advice one gives and gets, and the ensuing warnings, however tintured with his own spirit and that of his times, are not merely a comment on Sir William's character, they are the principles of life as old as society itself. Love soldiers for your father's and your country's sake, he says, but for yourself shun arms, since even "a wretched lawyer" has more profit than a soldier. Above all shun quarrels, "of two evils it were better to keep company with a coward than a quarreler; the one is commonly friendly and sociable, the other dangerous in his acquaintance." Shun drinking and drunkards, swearing and women, take exercises of mind and body, the latter not merely to "increase health and agility, make a man sociable, . . . draw acquaintance, . . . bring a man into favor with a prince and prove a preferment to one's marriage," but because it is peculiarly useful "in running and escaping an enemy." Tobacco, he condemns unmercifully, since "it dries the brain and many become fools with the continual use of it," and there, if nowhere else, does he join hands with James. Shun curious and costly clothing, he goes on to say; shun too much solitude and too much court; be choice of company but friendly to all; shun idleness; and if you marry "choose a wife as near you in calling, years and condition" as possible, "for the greatest fortune a man can expect is in his marriage,"—which last observation, in any view, is a profound remark. Finally, "if God be pleased to give you children, let them make you to abandon the delights and pleasures of the world in respect to the comfort and joy you receive by them. Make account then that summer is past and that the melancholy winter approaches, for a careful and provident father cannot take delight in the world and provide for his children,"—whatever the old admiral's discreet silence concerning mothers may portend.

There, in a way, you have him, cautious, prudent, with knowledge of the pitfalls of the world, a careful father and a wise and not unlikable man, with more of kindness than you might other-

wise suspect. So, too, he later advises his second son in the same strain, especially commending to him patience and temperance. And, amid wise advice from ancient instances, to the gentlemen adventurers, he bids them, though "time and ingratitude are the destroyers of all noble and memorable acts, and have caused you to be forgot, though it be scandal to a commonwealth where princes make more of favourites than of well-deservers, it behooves you not to approve or repine at it but to hope that act of his will not stand as a precedent." It is as well perhaps that James the Pusillanimous, at whom this not obliquely hints, was safely dead before this came to print. Finally to the men of his own kind he rises almost to eloquence. "What," he inquires, "would it avail that all boughs of trees were oaks, or every stalk of hemp a cable, or every creature a perfect artist, to frame and build a ship . . . were it not for you . . . ? She were like a sumptuous costly palace, nobly furnished, nobody to inhabit it. . . . How should we know France, Italy and Spain produced wine out of the grape . . . the Indies and the wealth therein . . . but for your skill and labour? . . . What subjects make their king and country more happy than you . . . what honour have your adventures and your valour brought to England above all other nations!" There speaks the admiral.

And to the reader, having commended his book first to his friends, then to his fellow-adventurers and mariners generally, now he "prohibits none but the perverse Puritans, whose stomachs are so faint and feeble that any praise that can be attributed to a Spaniard or a Papist will make them sea-sick," from reading what he has written. So much for the stout Anglican, suspected of Catholicism,—and so much, too, for a generous enemy. One thing he disliked more than a Puritan. "If I could think of a more proper word than *Project* to entitle this ensuing book," he writes by way of preface to the fifth collection, "I would do it; for the names of projects and the inventors of them are grown so hateful and contemptible that all honest men abhor and detest them. There are no burthens which the sharpness of lewd brains can invent to vex the commonwealth with but they style by the name of projects, when indeed the name of *Promoter* were more proper. . . . Such men

are a curse to the country that breeds them, to their friends and parents that nourished them, and to God himself that created them. . . . They pretend evil under the colour of good, set a fair countenance on a foul face, smile on those whose throats they would cut." It was indeed an age much like our own.

There you have him on many sides, most of them personal. But every man touches the universal at some point, and in proportion to the degree of that contact he becomes of interest to the rest of us. Nor is Sir William an exception to the rule. First, and indeed last, and most of the intervening time, he is the naval expert. Courtier, adventurer, seaman, politician, admiral, every page reflects above all the professional commander and strategist. This, you may imagine, is the precise quality which is likely to repel the general reader, and to confine the appreciation of his book to men of like profession with himself. Yet in this resides, after all, the universal element, for in the contrast between the amateur and the professional spirit which he here reveals there lies the old eternal conflict between the real and the ideal in its acutest form. To the amateur alone is it given to look on his achievements in the light of romance; the professional demands not merely brilliant and heroic endeavor but results. To him heroism is all in the day's work; brilliance, enthusiasm, and their kind are but elements in the imperative success. For him the emotional value and appeal which moulds popular opinion has little charm; with him romance no place. And this is true in every line of human activity forming the indissoluble bond of brotherhood between all men who really achieve.

To such the dry savor of Sir William must inevitably appeal. Take one instance of many in his book. Who has not read in prose or verse the *Fight of the Revenge*; how Sir Richard Grenville with his single ship fought a whole Spanish fleet, till of his hundred men scarce more than half were left alive, and with his powder gone, six feet of water in his vessel's hold, and he himself wounded to the death, begged his master gunner to blow up the ship! From Raleigh to Tennyson the tale has thrilled the centuries, like that of the Spartans at Thermopylæ, the Song of Roland, the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

Now hear Sir William! "Upon view of the Spaniards," he begins, "Sir Thomas [Howard], like a wary and discreet general, weighed anchor and made signs to the rest of his fleet to do the like. . . . But Sir Richard Grenville, . . . imagining this fleet to come from the Indies and not to be the Armada of which they were informed, would by no means be persuaded by his master or company . . . to follow his Admiral, as all discipline of war did teach him. . . . But the old saying that a wilful man never wanteth woe could not be more truly verified than in him. For when the Spanish ships approached nigh unto him and he beheld the greatness of them he . . . would gladly have acquitted himself of them. Which then to the best of his power he endeavored, but too late, for he was left a prey to the enemy."

And so ended Sir Richard Grenville, after a desperate resistance against, not the fifty-three of Tennyson's poem, but what was perhaps equally hopeless if not so spectacular, eighteen of the enemy's fleet. So, too, he made a gallant end,—“at the expense of his men and the needless loss of a ship.” Always the professional comment is the same. “Ah, yes,” observed the great strategist, of Thermopylæ, “the Spartans paid the penalty for their inexcusable carelessness in neglecting to secure their flank.” “It is magnificent, but it is not war,” declared the French commander, as he watched the Light Brigade ride into the jaws of death at Balaclava. We do not know Charlemagne's comment on the captain of his rearguard who allowed himself to be cut off from the main body at Roncesvaux, but, expressed in forcible Frankish, it was doubtless to the same effect. With all their valor the heroes of literature are far from being the heroes of real war. It is glorious to die for one's country, but it is no less glorious, and far more to the point, to destroy the enemy and save your own men as much as possible. The stubborn courage of the fighting human animal caught in a trap is almost as common as the spirit of martyrdom. Compared with the weakness of those willing to exchange honor or faith for life, it cannot, perhaps, be too highly praised. But when it is set beside the temper which joins to emotion the intelligence that leads to ultimate success it seems unconvincing. When folly is redeemed with life it becomes, indeed, heroic, in the usual

meaning of the word; but only when courage is joined to intellect does it reach the level of true greatness, even though literature does so often find its heroes on the lower levels. Such is the lesson that Monson and his kind are set to preach to a too-heedless world.

And lest you may think that the old admiral with his caution was a coward at bottom, take a not dissimilar adventure of his own. The Earl of Essex, having intelligence of a hostile fleet, detached Monson to reconnoitre with one ship. "About twelve o'clock in the night," so runs his story, "I fell in with twenty-five sail; whereupon I put myself into my boat resolved to discover what they were hailed them in Spanish and knew them to be the Indies fleet; and having as much as I desired performed so much as I was commanded, in shooting of my ordnance and making false fires; all the hurt that happened to me beside the hazzard of shot from the castles and the fleet, my ship being shot through fifteen times, was foul words and railing language." And so, with the necessary information he rejoined his admiral,—and failed of Grenville's immortality.

From which, and an infinity of incident beside, it is apparent that Sir William's chief concern was not personal glory but intelligence in every meaning of the word. To him, as to his kind generally, whatever their profession, there are three unpardonable sins, cowardice, stupidity, and insubordination; and from him one gets, in consequence, what is so useful a corrective to the legendary history of his age, the reduction of heroic deeds and characters to their proper size and their relation to the real circumstances of their time. To him the struggle of England against Spain was no war of pygmies and giants, where success was given to the incredible heroism of the weaker power. The Spaniards, for the most part, were, he says quite frankly and truthfully, overmatched in ships, ordnance, seamanship, crews and commanders, as every naval expert and most historians are now fully aware. From the day when, with the loss of not a single ship and scarcely sixty men, the English destroyed the Invincible Armada, to the time when, two generations later, Spain's efforts on both sides of the world to crush the Dutch

sea-power brought her to ruin, England had every advantage over her unwieldy rival, save the one to which mistaken popular opinion attribute her success, that of physical courage. And, as Sir William recognizes, it is poor praise to one's own prowess to enlarge upon the cowardice of one's enemy,—a lesson which should be well digested by too-strenuous partisans at all times.

Yet he was not, on the other hand, a mere iconoclast, nor did he lack a proper sense of true greatness, when it came his way; he only demanded, as we ought all to demand, that it should not be the false glitter of the charlatan by whom the multitude is most commonly deceived. Read but his estimate of Drake. "There is no man so perfect," he begins, "but is fit to be amended, nor none so evil but he has something in him to be praised. And, comparing the imperfections of Sir Francis Drake with his perfections, the world, not I, shall truly judge of his merits. His detractors allege to his blemish and imputation the baseness of his birth and education, his ostentation and vain-glorious boasting; his high, haughty, and insolent carriage; and except against his sufficiency for a General, though they allow him to be an able captain. His friends and favourites answer in his behalf that the meanness of his birth was an argument of his worth; for what he attained to was by no other means than merit. They say that every man is son to his works, and what one has by his ancestors can scarcely be called his own; that virtue is the cause of preferment, and honour but the effect. . . . In excuse of his ostentation and vain-glory they say it was not incident to him alone but to most men of his profession and rank. It is true that he could speak much and arrogantly, but eloquently, which bred a wonder that his education could yield him those helps of nature. . . . And though vain-glory is a vice not to be excused, yet he obtained that fame by his actions, that facility in speaking, and that wisdom by his experience, that I can but say no more but that we are all children of Adam. . . . A General ought to be stern towards his soldiers, courageous in heart, valiant in fight, generous in giving, patient in suffering, and merciful in pardoning. And if Sir Francis Drake was to be praised for most of these virtues, let him not be blamed or condemned for one only vice. . . .

No man had truer trial of the inconstancy of fortune than he. For the nature of fortune is to bite when she flatters, and to strike when she is angry . . . and fortune did much for him, but at his death she was angry."

Surely he who so unsparingly condemned the Grenvilles of his time was at least capable of appreciating what he conceived to be true greatness. He was, indeed, no hero-worshipper; but who can doubt, if he had had a hero, who that hero would have been? And where, in the light of this and other passages of the kind, now lies the editor who said that Sir William could not write?

Not that, even so, is he, or like to be, a famous man. "Reputation," we are told, "rests upon long accumulation of character and service, fame springs out of the deed of the moment,"—with a reporter at hand to immortalize it; and, in default of such, he must remain a man of reputation rather than of fame. Nor is that reputation as great as he desired; perhaps not so great as it is like to be. The men of his own service have re-discovered him; perhaps the men of letters may follow in their train. Even in an age when possibly too credulous publishers proclaim almost from day to day new masterpieces to a certainly too credulous public, and when old literary monuments are apt to suffer the fate of all monuments, a hasty glance from hurrying travellers; even in such an age, though it be our own, six stout volumes concealed in the publications of a learned society may not prevent some courageous souls from giving Sir William his chance to escape oblivion.

And more; once the rose glow of romance is somewhat withdrawn, and the clear light of truth is allowed to play upon the spacious days of great Elizabeth, we may be able to perceive that Monson is no unfit representative of his times. He was, indeed, no Sidney, he was far from reaching the heights of Drake; and, whatever we may think of James, his predecessor's reign still seems to most of us both splendid and heroic, while Sir William's character does not greatly commend itself in either quality. He has appealed as little to one editor's sense of greatness as to the other's sense of style—and to whom shall one be a hero if not to his editor? Yet this may not be wholly

due to his defects compared with the perfections of his time. He may not touch its highest peaks, yet he is far from sinking to its lowest levels. He was by no means the wisest, brightest, meanest of his age, yet all the more its typical product. Like man, like book. No Shakespeare or Bacon, scarcely a Raleigh, his too fluent pen has drawn for us his portrait with his times; his faults are blazoned large by both his editors, yet they have little reason for their often expressed fear of his attempt to deceive posterity as to what sort of man and book we have. No one who reads him largely can possibly be deceived. For in his pages, all unconsciously he is what we must inevitably recognize,—seaman-courtier-author, strange compound of greatness and littleness, brave, crafty, voluble, world-wise and simple, ambitious, greedy of wealth and power, proud, loyal, prejudiced, stubborn, subservient,—a true Elizabethan Englishman.

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